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Mr. Speice

Independent Study & Mentorship

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**Interview Assessment #7**

**Name of Professional:** Mr. Michael Berger

**Profession/ Title:** Regional Director: North Asia

**Business/ Company Name:** 7-11

**Date of Interview:** November 8, 2017

Over the past few weeks I had been focusing on International Business and Brand Management, but in efforts to learn more about Business Management, I scheduled an interview with Mr. Michael Berger, the Regional Director of 7-11. During the my first informational interview with Mr. Jerome Del Porto, I had asked if he could give me the contacts of some more international business professionals. As a result, Mr. Del Porto asked Mr. Berger to reach out to me. Thus, I had the pleasure to learn about international business management from Mr. Berger.

Mr. Berger began our meeting by first talking about his past and how he got into business. Although Mr. Berger had an undergraduates degree in theater arts, he decided to pursue his lifelong dream of starting a business, and he moved to Costa Rica because sometimes it is easier to start business projects abroad than it is in the United States.While in Costa Rica, Mr. Berger started his own coffee shop and bed and breakfast and he stayed in Costa Rica for nine years. Because of his entrepreneurial endeavors in Costa Rica, Mr. Berger was able to come back to the United States with a plethora of experience in international business. Much like Mr. Berger’s life in Costa Rica, many of the other professionals that I had interviewed also had similar experiences. For example, Mr. Jerome Del Porto’s job in the French Embassy had significantly helped him in attaining his current job as the Vice President of 7-11. In addition, Ms. Megan Stein’s experience in Thailand helped her attain the credibility that she needed in order to become the head of Pizza Hut Marketing.

Continuing on with the interview, I asked Mr. Berger to talk about the skills that are essential in international business. Mr. Berger talked about how having a love for travel and adventure is very important because it allows you to truly enjoy all of the long travel hours where you are away from everything familiar. I was able to relate to this because I love learning about different cultures and having new experiences excites me. Furthermore, Mr. Berger said that having an innate curiosity and being flexible is also important because it is very important to relate and remain comfortable even in uncomfortable and unknown environments. Many of the other professionals that I interviewed also talked about the importance of these skills.

Interested in the roles and responsibilities that Mr. Berger has as the Regional Director at 7-11, I asked him to detail what he does. Mr. Berger said that his job has two main segments: a strategic element and a tactical element. In terms of the strategic element, Mr. Berger deals with license management for different countries in North Asia such as Korea and Taiwan. To understand the current perspective of the market and franchises in this region, Mr. Berger uses analysis tools such as the PEST Analysis (political, environmental, social, technological) and SWOT Analysis (strength, weakness, opportunity, and threat). He also keeps up on the current affairs of the world by listening to the news and noting how a certain event would affect his job and company. For example, a recent crisis occured with the parent company of 7-11, LOTE, in which the company gave some of its property to the Korean Government, causing China to boycott some 7-11 stores. Such events happen often in international business, and as a result, Mr. Berger believes that it is important to read up on current events even if it doesn’t affect 7-11 most of the time.

Given that 7-11 is more popular in Asian markets, I asked Mr. Berger to talk about how he deals with competition in that area. Mr. Berger says that 7-11 has developed an identity as selling different private brands that may be local to the area, and then also selling certain uniform global items. This model is quite similar to Pizza Hut’s model of keeping certain popular dishes the same in all franchises, but then also offering different dishes that are tailored to the local culture.

Through my previous interviews with Ms. Regina Borda and Ms. Megan Stein I had learned a lot about brand management, and so in efforts to connect my knowledge, I asked Mr. Berger about how the company deals with brand management. Mr. Berger responded by saying that there is ongoing internal education through seminars to help franchises learn about branding elements. In fact, 7-11 has a “guide Bible” that is distributed to all franchise owners, just like the Pizza Hut “Playbook” that is given to its respective franchisees.

As our interview came to an end, I asked Mr. Berger if he had any parting words of advice. Mr. Berger told me to sign up for newsletters such as the Dallas Retail Association, which talks about different business professionals’ experiences and current affairs of the world. He also said that I should look into signing up for the DFW Association for Training and Development because the organization is very beneficial in helping budding business professionals form contacts. Most of all, Mr. Berger said that asking questions and being curious is the most important quality to have because it shows other business professionals that I am willing to learn.

Through my interview with Mr. Berger, I was able to gain a more holistic understanding of international business, and I was able to apply all of the information that I have received from past interviews. Mr. Berger also made me realize how beneficial ISM is because it allows me to create a name for myself in the professional community in a humble way, and it is truly a stepping stone to success.